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Medical Skills Desk  
Division of Recruiting  
PEACE CORPS  
Washington, D.C. 20525



### NURSES IN THE PEACE CORPS

Nursing is assuming an increasingly important role in the world today.

As nations all over the world develop, they place greater and greater emphasis on training their own people to give good nursing care. To aid them in their programs, many developing nations are asking the Peace Corps to send Volunteer nurses.

Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver has made a special point of encouraging nurses, both recent graduates and experienced nurses, to help fulfill these requests.

Over 500 nurses have now joined the Peace Corps to serve in Africa, Asia, the Far East and Latin America. They have been teaching in urban and rural nursing schools, working in rural clinics, making home visits and teaching good health practices in slum areas and rural villages, organizing in-service education programs in hospitals, conducting immunization campaigns, planning and executing health education programs, and working and teaching in specialty hospitals.

Many more Volunteer nurses are needed to continue and expand these programs and initiate new ones. Programs for training and overseas assignments begin year round. Two of the many programs which will soon begin training are for Turkey and Colombia. Because these countries represent vastly different cultures and illustrate two different types of nursing programs, they will be described in detail.

TURKEY

There are approximately 300 Peace Corps Volunteers in the nation of Turkey today. They are working in education, community development, social work, home economics, commercial education and nursing. And yet there remains so much to be done.

Turkey currently has a ratio of 6 doctors to every nurse as compared to the U.S. ratio of 2.3 nurses to every doctor. Turkey, in its current five-year plan, has placed a great emphasis on nursing education and this is where Peace Corps Volunteer nurses come in.

If you should go to Turkey as a Peace Corps Volunteer nurse, you would be working under the direct supervision of the Nursing or Midwifery School's Director. You would, as an instructor, teach in a formal classroom setting and conduct demonstrations on the wards. You would expect some professional guidance and advice from the school's head instructress. You would be working primarily with third and fourth year students (equivalent to our high school juniors and seniors) who upon graduation will be the Turkish equivalent of our registered nurses. You would be lecturing on basic nursing arts and techniques. You would also conduct follow-up sessions on the wards where you will give practical demonstrations.

Nurses with public health backgrounds will serve as instructors at the Florence Nightingale School of Nursing in Istanbul where they will teach at the university level. Public health, rather than nursing arts, will be taught. The Florence Nightingale School is the only nursing school in Turkey where a university degree is awarded. Several Peace Corps nurses will teach at the Post Basic School of Nursing in Ankara. Students at this school

become nursing instructors upon graduation. During the last three years, Peace Corps nurses at work in Turkish nursing schools have met with many frustrations. Some of the problems that they have faced are:

The hospital's water supply is cut off each day and you can only store small amounts for daily use. How would you set up a system for handwashing?

The students are assigned to all the departments in the hospital and there are just two of you to supervise them. When you are not on the unit, many of them just walk around or go out of the hospital. How could you set up an effective system of supervision?

The hospital has a 30-bed medical unit and a 30-bed surgical unit both on the same floor. There are 20 students assigned to each service and the nursing care given is minimal. How would you arrange to keep the students busy for eight hours a day?

Nurses only want to give injections and relatively little care to patients. How would you go about teaching them the importance of good nursing care?

On the lighter side, you will be in a country which is historically fascinating--bordered by the Black Sea on the north and the Mediterranean on the south with dramatic changes of scenery and climate in between. The Turkish people, perhaps as a result of mixing so many different peoples, are exceedingly friendly.

During the three-month training program before you go to Turkey, you will learn to communicate with the people in their language. In addition, you will spend many hours on the technical studies portion of training which is designed to help each nurse to utilize and develop her skills to function effectively in the particular nursing program to which she will be assigned. Peace Corps nurses who have served in Turkey and have now returned after two years will help you during training.

COLOMBIA

There are presently about 600 Volunteers in Colombia, working in community action, health, agriculture, educational television, education, arts and crafts, and cooperative programs.

The high rates of infant and maternal mortality, the short life expectancy, and the high incidence of communicable disease in Colombia indicate the need for increased medical and health services and health education. The great lack of trained medical personnel is the greatest obstacle in improving the national health and, for this reason, the Colombian Ministry of Health has requested a group of Volunteer nurses to teach and help train Colombian practical nurses and nurses' aides on a departmental and local level.

You as a Peace Corps Volunteer nurse would teach practical nurses and/or nursing auxiliaries at a nursing school or hospital. Practical nurses and nurses' aides are scarce, and it is hoped that many practical nurses with one year of training will help Colombia decrease the shortage. The average course for practical nurses lasts one year. In exceptional circumstances, it may be extended to 15 months. Three months of the course is spent on classroom theory. The remaining nine months is spent in learning practical theory, rotation through hospital services, and lectures and demonstrations daily. Each school has only one class per year, although the school year starts at different times throughout the country. The 20 existing training institutions located throughout the country usually teach an average of 30 students per year with a faculty of one nurse "director" and one nurse "instructor."

Your job would be very important to the country of Colombia. Not only will you be teaching the principles of clinical nursing and giving practical demonstrations, you will be stimulating self-improvement among the young trainees and inspiring young women to undertake nurse's training in a country where it is looked on as a menial task. In some places it is even regarded as a dishonorable profession, and you will help overcome this general attitude. You will technically backstop non-professional health Volunteers assigned to your area by lecturing on such subjects as first aid and good pediatric care to groups which they have organized. You will also help them in immunization programs, conducting in-service training programs, standardizing procedures or establishing record systems in the health centers.

You will face many difficulties in the performance of your duties-- poorly equipped hospitals, inadequately trained personnel, and criteria different from your own. You would have to be able to communicate both professionally and personally with your co-workers, your patients and the people in your particular area.

During the three-month training program prior to departure for Colombia, you will learn to communicate in Spanish. You will learn of the major health problems and needs in Colombia, the structural set up and the types of health services available to Colombians, and the social and cultural factors which will affect your professional role there. You will also be given instruction on principles of learning and teaching and principles of ward management and supervision with emphasis on adaptation of these principles to Colombia. Starting IV/s and simple suturing are duties of the Colombian nurse and you would be expected to understand the basic methods.

After training and a brief home leave, you would go to Colombia and be assigned to one of the mountainous areas, to a coastal town, to the grassy plains, or to a lush valley region. Wherever you are, you will be needed and the Colombians will graciously welcome you.

The governments of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Panama, Afghanistan, and India have also requested Volunteer nurses for programs entering training this summer. It is expected that these and other countries will need even more in the fall. Depending on the country, nurses will be assigned to urban nursing schools, rural health centers, or maternal and child centers. They also will teach nutrition and sanitation on a local level. In all cases, it is hoped that you would work with a national counterpart and in some manner, either informally or formally, be teaching.

Recent graduates and those with further education and experience are needed. Peace Corps Volunteer Questionnaires (applications) can be obtained at Post Offices or by writing: Peace Corps, Washington, D.C. 20525.

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